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## RECENT DISCUSSIONS OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

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### III.<sup>1</sup>

WHAT now is the testimony of Josephus and of Tacitus as to the date of Felix' removal and Festus' accession as procurator of Judea (the crucial point in the chronology of the apostolic age), and how is the conflicting testimony to be interpreted?

1. *The conflict.*—Josephus first refers to Felix in *Antiquities*, XX, vii, 1, where he says: "Then Claudius sent Felix, the brother of Pallas, to administer affairs in Judea." This is immediately followed by the narration of Claudius' gift of Philip's tetrarchy to Agrippa II, which we otherwise know was in 53. So that, according to Josephus, Felix' accession seems to have been in 52 or 53. In the preceding two chapters (*Antiquities*, XX, v, vi) Josephus speaks of Cumanus, the procurator of Judea, as though he was alone governor over all the Roman province of Judea, including Judea proper, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea. The account seems to know nothing of the presence or authority of Felix in the province previous to his procuratorship beginning in 52 or 53. Similarly in *Jewish War*, II, xii, 1, Josephus writes: "Now after the death of Herod, king of Chalcis [which was in 48], Claudius set Agrippa, the son of Agrippa, over his uncle's kingdom, while Cumanus took upon him the office of procurator of the rest, which was a Roman province, and therein he succeeded Alexander." Then passing over six paragraphs in the history, we come to § 8, where we read: "After this Cæsar sent Felix, the brother of Pallas, to be procurator of Galilee, and Samaria, and Perea." The question naturally arises why Judea proper is not here mentioned as a part of Felix' territory; the absence is presumably due to the context. No one has doubted that, after Felix succeeded Cumanus as governor of Galilee, he had control of the whole province.

<sup>1</sup> The preceding portion of this article appeared in the February number, pp. 112-19.

Tacitus' account is in conflict with this record of Felix. In the *Annals*, xii, 54, relating the events of the year 52 (see Furneaux's *Annals of Tacitus*, Vol. II, pp. 283-5), Tacitus writes: "His [Pallas'] brother, surnamed Felix, for some time governor of Judea (iam pridem Judææ inpositus), acted not with the same moderation, but relying upon such powerful protection, supposed he might perpetrate with impunity every kind of villainy. . . . Felix, too, meanwhile, by applying unseasonable remedies, inflamed the disaffection, emulated as he was in his abandoned courses by Ventidius Cumanus, who held part of the province; the division being such that Galilee was subject to Cumanus, and Samaria to Felix (Cumano, cui pars provinciæ habebatur, ita divisus, ut huic Galilæorum natio, Felici Samaritæ parerent)." Judea proper is not mentioned here, although it presumably was Felix' district, for the reason that the account is narrating a conflict between the Galileans and Samaritans.

Which account represents the actual facts of the history? Did Felix first become procurator in 52 or 53, succeeding Cumanus, and from the beginning governing the whole Roman province of Judea, as Josephus states? Or did Felix begin his career in this province in the year 48, contemporaneously with Cumanus, Felix being procurator over Judea and Samaria, while Cumanus was procurator over Galilee; this continuing until 52 or 53, when, because of trouble between the Samaritans and Galileans, the account of which is quite similar as given by both historians, Cumanus was banished and Felix was procurator alone over the whole province, as Tacitus states?

There is general agreement that Tacitus is immeasurably the superior of Josephus as a historian. In general, therefore, Tacitus' account would be immediately and strongly preferred as in all probability the more accurate. In this particular case, however, one hesitates because Josephus' account seems at first sight the more probable of the two. There is no other instance of two Roman procurators governing portions of the Roman province of Judea side by side; if this was the case for the four years, 48-52 A. D., it was an exception to the rule. Yet we must notice that the division of territory which Tacitus here mentions, Judea proper and Samaria forming one district and Galilee another, was an actual historical division during the first half of the first century A. D. The ethnarchy of Archelaus (Judea proper and Samaria) was in 6 A. D. changed into a Roman province and governed by a procurator until 41 A. D., when it was given to Herod Agrippa I, as was also the tetrarchy of Antipas (of which Galilee was a part), which

Antipas had lost in 39 A. D. For three years Herod Agrippa I was ruler over Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; then he died in 44 A. D. Now, what became of the two districts, formerly separate except for the three years preceding 44 A. D.? There certainly is nothing unlikely in the view that they returned to their separate condition, a procurator being again, after a lapse of three years, appointed over Judea and Samaria, and the district of Galilee (and Perea) forming a new procuratorship; and that this state of things continued for eight years, until the trouble under Felix and Cumanus, between the Samaritans and Galileans, when the emperor had to intervene, Cumanus was banished, and Felix was given both districts, which from that time on were counted one procuratorial district.

But this is what Tacitus leads us to infer, not what Josephus describes. In *Antiquities*, XX, v, he narrates that Fadus was procurator of the whole province after the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44 A. D., until succeeded by Tiberius Alexander, who in time ruled until succeeded by Cumanus in 48 A. D. His account certainly knows nothing of a twofold procuratorship between 44 and 52 A. D.

Which one of the historians is more likely to have known accurately the facts? One's first thought would be, Josephus of course. He was a Jew living in Judea at the time, while Tacitus was a Roman not born before 52. And Josephus wrote his account of this matter about 93 or 94 A. D., some twenty-two years before Tacitus wrote his account, in 115 or 116 A. D. But the answer is not so certain. Josephus was born in 37 or 38 A. D., so that during Cumanus' procuratorship (48-52 A. D.) he was at best only eleven to fifteen years old, and when he was sixteen years old, in 53, he left Jerusalem to live in the desert with the Essenes, and was gone for three years (*Life*, § 2). When Josephus, then, forty or forty-five years later, came to write about the events of the years 48-56 A. D., is it probable that his own memory of the events would have given him the facts accurately? But in the case of Tacitus his account is drawn wholly from written sources—he has no personal memory of the events concerned, and oral tradition would not give him the long detailed account of the Samaritan-Galilean trouble in which his statement about the twofold procuratorship of Felix and Cumanus is imbedded. And if Tacitus had this information from a Roman written source, it is presumably accurate. His writing two decades later than Josephus makes no real difference. The Romans kept written records of their officials in the provinces, and the important events of their administrations. An account from that direc-

tion concerning the Roman officials in the province of Judea is more likely to be correct than one from a Jewish source, whether Josephus' own memory, or a Jewish written source, although of the latter there is no indication (*Antiquities*, XX, xi, 2).

It looks, therefore, as though Tacitus' account presents claims for our acceptance at least no less strong than those of Josephus' account. It may be conjectured, if Tacitus' account is the correct one, that Fadus and Tiberius Alexander (*Antiquities*, XX, v) were contemporary procurators from 44 to 48 A. D., the former over Judea and Samaria, the latter over Galilee (and Perea); and that they were succeeded in 48 A. D. by Felix (who took Fadus' place), and Cumanus (who took Tiberius Alexander's place). The former pair Tacitus does not mention, the latter pair he clearly describes. The change to a single procurator over the whole province was then the result of the trouble between the Samaritans and Galileans under the latter pair, on account of which Claudius banished Cumanus, and Felix was left governor of both districts.<sup>2</sup>

On the supposition that Josephus is wrong, and that Felix began his procuratorship in 48 instead of 52 A. D., much of what happened during his term of office, and which Josephus has of necessity placed *after* 52, would now be assigned to years preceding 52. The events recorded in *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 5-8, which indicate, perhaps, a few years' time, the suppression of the robbers and imposters, the secret assassination of the high priest Jonathan, the appearance of the "Egyptian" insurrectionist (*cf.* Acts 21:38) and his overthrow, the

<sup>2</sup>It may be that we find even in Josephus an evidence that Tacitus' account gives the correct idea of Felix' procuratorship. It is told (*Antiquities*, XX, viii, 5) that Felix had the high priest Jonathan secretly assassinated because he gave him too much advice about governing Jewish affairs, and that it was Jonathan himself who had asked Claudius to make Felix procurator of Judea. This would suggest that Felix had had a previous acquaintance with Judean leaders, which falls in line admirably with the Tacitus account that Felix had already been one of the two procurators in the province.

Some of the scholars who support Tacitus against Josephus in this matter are Mommsen (*Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II, p. 220), O. Holtzmann, Blass, Harnack, McGiffert (in works cited above), and Ramsay (*St. Paul the Traveler*, p. 313). Ramsay says: "The remarkable contradiction between Josephus . . . and Tacitus . . . is resolved by Mommsen in favor of Tacitus as the better authority on such a point; and most students of Roman history will agree with him." Compare Schürer's extreme statement: "It seems a matter scarcely to be questioned that the very detailed narrative of Josephus deserves to be preferred to the indeterminate remarks made by Tacitus" (*Jewish People, etc.*, I, ii, 174).

strife between the Jews and Syrians in the city of Cæsarea, and the trouble among the high priests and their followers in Jerusalem, can be so adjusted to the years 48 and following that they present no difficulty whatever with the view that Felix was recalled in 55 A. D.<sup>3</sup>

2. *The combination*.—At one other point the accounts of Josephus and Tacitus concerning Felix touch each other. In the *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 9, Josephus says: "Now, when Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero, the principal of the Jewish inhabitants of Cæsarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix; and he would certainly have been brought to punishment for his offenses against the Jews, had not Nero yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time held in the greatest honor by him." While Tacitus states (*Annals*, xiii, 14, 15) that Pallas was dismissed from Nero's court shortly before the date at which Britannicus completed his fourteenth year. Britannicus was born February 13, 41, so that this date would be February 13, 55. This year 55 is also fixed by the names of the consuls, so that the year 56 does not begin until *Annals*, xiii, 25.

By combining these two data, one from Josephus and one from Tacitus, we seem to ascertain that Felix' recall from the procuratorship of Judea preceded February 13, 55, because after that time his brother Pallas, by whose intercession Felix was saved from punishment, had no influence at Nero's court. Felix was recalled by Nero; but Nero became emperor October 13, 54. Then between October 13, 54, and February 13, 55, a period of four months, and a time of closed navigation on the Mediterranean Sea, there seem to fall, on

<sup>3</sup> On this point Professor McGiffert says (p. 358): "Josephus' apparent ignorance touching Felix' presence and authority in Palestine before the year 52 probably explains the fact that he relates most of the deeds which he ascribes to Felix, including his victory over the Egyptian referred to in Acts 21:38, in connection with the reign of Nero. At any rate, in view of that ignorance it is clear that no valid argument against the earlier date for Paul's arrest can be drawn from the fact that such events are connected by Josephus with Nero's reign." Thus, easily and successfully, does the advocate of the earlier date put aside the argument which Professor Ramsay (*Expositor*, March, 1897, p. 207) pronounced "conclusive" against him.

Some eight days after Paul's arrest in Jerusalem the Acts (24:10) reports him as saying to Felix: "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years (ἐκ πολλῶν ἐτῶν) a judge unto this nation," etc. Upon the current view the "many years" are six, namely, 52-58 A. D. Upon the view of the earlier date, with Tacitus' time for Felix' accession, the years are five or six, from 48 to 53 or 54. So this passage does not stand in the way of the scheme of earlier dates. The "many years" seems an extravagant statement in either case; perhaps Paul's exact words were not preserved.

Josephus' representation, the recall of Felix, the appointment of his successor, Festus, the journey of the Jewish deputation to Rome to accuse Felix, the journey of Felix to Rome, the trial and acquittal of Felix, and the downfall of Pallas. Now, on no theory of *probabilities* could these events have taken place in this brief period under these circumstances ; and on the basis of probabilities, when specific information is not attainable, must history be written.

The difficulty here is not squarely met either by Holtzmann or by McGiffert, while Blass and Harnack add another year to the period for these events, on the authority of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, but contrary to Tacitus' explicit dating. Advocates of the current view, the scheme of later dates, explain away Josephus' datum here, in one of two ways : either that Josephus was wrong in stating that Pallas was still in favor at Nero's court when he secured Felix' acquittal, or that he was wrong in stating that Pallas was the medium of the acquittal. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Pallas, after his dismissal by Nero, may still have had sufficient influence at court—he was one of the wealthiest men in Rome—to secure his brother Felix' release. But this does not seem quite probable, for Pallas had been dismissed by Nero because he was Agrippina's right-hand man in a plot to overthrow Nero and make Britannicus emperor in his stead. He certainly was not restored to favor, and seven years later was put to death by poison at Nero's bidding. Once during these years he was brought to trial on another conspiracy charge, but was acquitted, as it was a clear case of blackmail (*Annals*, xiii, 23).

It is perfectly plain that Josephus is wrong at some point in his account. It may be in regard to the just-mentioned position or influence of Pallas. But the advocate of the earlier date has recourse to another explanation. Assuming as correct Tacitus' account that Felix began his procuratorship in 48 A. D., Josephus' account of the events of Felix' term of office has to be readjusted. It may be simply a part of this displacement (see above) that Josephus has made Nero, instead of Claudius, issue Felix' recall. Felix was recalled for his maladministration ; so it may as well have been by Claudius as by Nero. This explanation corrects Josephus in but one point instead of two. The recall might then be placed early enough to admit of the above-named events taking place before February 13, 55. It appears from *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 8–10, that there was an interval between Felix' withdrawal and Festus' arrival at Judea, when there were violent disturbances in Jerusalem because "there was nobody to punish

them, but these things were done with impunity, as in a city without a government." Festus may not have been for some months appointed Felix' successor, or, if soon appointed, he may have had to wait until navigation opened in 55 before he went to his province, for he arrived in Judea in the summer. Paul was given hearing during the month or two months following, and was started on his prison journey to Rome in the late summer or early autumn (*cf.* Acts 27: 1, 7, 9).

If Festus became procurator in 55 A. D., his term of office lasted several years, perhaps to 61 A. D. The next procurator was Albinus, and his term of office began not later than four years before the outbreak of the Jewish War (*Jewish War*, VI, v, 3) in 62 A. D. (*Jewish War*, II, xiv, 4); it may have been some years earlier. There is no difficulty whatever in so arranging the terms of office of Festus and Albinus. Josephus has recorded for these years a proportionate amount of events (*Antiquities*, XX, viii, 9-11; ix, 1-7; *Jewish War*, II, xiv, 1).

#### IV.

In the section just closed we have been comparing two dates for the recall of Felix and the accession of Festus: the date suggested by Josephus' account, which is anywhere from 57 to 61 A. D., commonly now regarded as 60 A. D.;<sup>4</sup> and the date suggested by Tacitus' account, partly in combination with Josephus (*Antiquities*, XX, viii, 9), which is 55 A. D.

A third date seems to be given us by the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, the

<sup>4</sup>Schürer (*Jewish People, etc.*, I, ii, pp. 182-4), after an extended discussion of the matter, concludes: "An exact and certain determination of the year in which Felix was recalled is clearly impossible. Most of recent investigators assume A. D. 60 as the most probable date. . . . There is, at least, a possibility of assuming the year 57, and so it is evidently possible to assign the removal of Felix to A. D. 59. It is most correct to say with Wurm, 'at the earliest in A. D. 58, at the latest in A. D. 61, most probably in A. D. 60.'" Professor Ramsay, writing in the *Expositor*, May, 1896, under the heading, "A Fixed Date in the Life of St. Paul," supposed that he had fixed the year 57 A. D. as the date of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem and arrest, so that Felix' recall would fall in 59 A. D. His argument was based on the passage, Acts 20: 5-7, which he regarded as unquestionably establishing the fact that the passover of that year fell on Thursday, which was the case in 57 A. D., but in no other approximate year. The certainty of this grew dim, however, and in the *Expositor* of March, 1897, he admits that it may have been Wednesday, instead of Thursday, on which this particular passover fell, and that would be the case in 54 A. D. So that he now says 54 or 57 for the year of Paul's arrest, 56 or 59 for the recall of Felix, although still preferring the later dates. After all, the argument seems too minute and exact to use as determinative.



year 56 A. D., or, to be more exact, the second year of Nero, which was October 13, 55, to October 13, 56. The Acts incidents of Paul's relations to Festus and removal to Rome, assigned as they are to the summer and autumn, point to the year 56. If the *Chronicle* were final authority on the matter, since it alone gives a specific date for the event, we should have the problem solved and the controversy settled. Harnack thinks that this is what should be done, and Blass, too, seems to think so. Harnack says: "The statements of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius are in all matters so trustworthy for the post-Christian period that he who questions them must give his reasons therefor. There are, of course, cases in which doubt is legitimate; therefore discrimination is necessary. If now, as in this case, out of his five figures for the Jewish procurators three are free from objection, and since it is natural to suppose that the *Chronicle* of Africanus is the source for these dates of the secular history, only very strong reasons should lead us to abandon the Eusebian chronology. This chronology was, demonstratedly, already a matter of interest in the second century, and to obtain the exact date for the entrance upon office of Felix and Festus could without difficulty have been accomplished at the beginning of the third century in Palestine." The optimism of the last sentence is hardly a satisfactory estimate of historical conditions at the beginning of the third century. If it then was so easy to determine with exactness such minor dates as the beginning of Felix' and Festus' procuratorships, why were not the more important dates of the first century accurately determined: as, for example, the dates of Jesus' birth, of Jesus' death, of the death of Peter and of Paul, and of the outbreak of the Neronian persecution? The Eusebian dates for the five procurators seem to be: Cumanus, mentioned as ruling in 48 (as procurator of all Judea); Felix, appointed in 50; Festus, appointed in 55 (56); Albinus, in 60 (61); Florus, in 63 (64). There is nothing to oppose the dates assigned to Cumanus, Albinus, and Florus, that is true; but neither is there anything to show that they are precisely right, while in the case of Felix' and Festus' dates there is conflicting testimony, for Eusebius' *Chronicle* is here positively opposed both by Tacitus and by Josephus.

But how much assurance have we that these dates which we call Eusebius' dates are, in fact, those which he preferred to any others? The dates of these procurators are from Jerome's version (381 A. D.) of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, not from the original *Chronicle* itself (*circa* 325 A. D.), so that a period of some fifty-six years lies between them. It is understood, also, that Jerome worked upon Eusebius' *Chronicle*, not as

a translator only, but also as a chronographer. The changes which he made cannot be fully known. Further, the Armenian version of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which is assigned to the fifth century, differs in many cases by years from the Jerome version, making Cumanus 47; Felix, 51; Festus, 54; Albinus, 59 (60); Florus, 62 (63). And, finally, the variations of the MSS. of the *Chronicle* put one in despair of arriving at any certainty as regards exact years. Let one make a comparison of the *Chronicle* as it appears in the editions of Schoene (1866), of Migne (1846), and of Mai (1833), if one wishes to get an idea of the situation.<sup>5</sup> The *general* value of the *Chronicle* for determining the consecution of events and their *approximate* dates is not here questioned. The contention is only that the *exact* year of Felix' recall should not be settled by the *Chronicle* against the testimony of Tacitus and Josephus. The Eusebian dating favors the Tacitus date as against the Josephus date; but in order that Harnack may support Eusebius against Tacitus, he has to accuse Tacitus of an error of a year (*i. e.*, 56 instead of 55), in the matter of the birthday of Britannicus, mentioned in *Annals*, xiii, 15. But that is impossible, for the year 55 is fixed by Britannicus' age, for that birthday was the one at which he would assume the *toga virilis* and so become specially dangerous to Nero, who poisoned him within a few weeks or months; it is fixed also by the names of the consuls of the year.

The issue, therefore, seems to lie between the earlier date 55 of Tacitus, supported somewhat by Eusebius and by two passages of Josephus (*Antiquities*, XX, viii, 5, 9), and the later date 57-61, probably 60, favored by Josephus' general narrative.

<sup>5</sup> Harnack himself says: "It is common to place no reliance upon *one* year in the best chronologies, since they reckon the years of the emperors differently." And Ramsay (*Expositor*, March, 1897) says: "At present it seems to me that we must choose between Eusebius and Josephus; and I am confident that everyone who is used to historical criticism must feel that Josephus is a much higher authority. The method of arranging events in a brief chronological table presented peculiar difficulties in ancient times, owing not only to the immense variety of eras, of ways of expressing dates by annual magistrates' names, by years of kings and emperors, etc., but also to the variation in the beginning of years (sometimes during the spring, sometimes at the autumn equinox, sometimes the first of January, etc.). Every historical student knows by experience how difficult it is even now to reduce a date by some ancient era to the proper year of our chronology; volumes by the score have been spent on this task, and many controversies, which are still raging, turn on this difficulty. Every student knows also how many mistakes of this kind exist in Jerome's Latin version of Eusebius' *Chronicle* (and the additions), as well as in the Armenian version. Moreover, MSS. of such a chronicle are peculiarly liable to errors of misplacement."

## V.

There is one further matter to be mentioned in this connection. The discussion has raised anew the question as to the date of Paul's death. Holtzmann, Harnack, Jülicher, and still earlier Wendt and Wieseler, have assigned the death of Paul to the year 64, in connection with the outbreak of the Neronian persecution. McGiffert places the death in 58, partly because he thinks the ending of the Acts requires this, and partly to clear the way for Peter's period of activity at Rome; but this view will hardly win acceptance. Current chronological schemes assign the death of Paul to any year from 65 to 68.

The arguments for assigning Paul's death to the year 64 are very strong. It is unquestioned that Paul died in the Neronian persecution, also that that persecution began in the middle of 64. There is no reason to think that the persecution lasted long; on the contrary, popular feeling must have soon reacted against it. The great probability, therefore, is that Paul was put to death in 64; the traditional manner of his execution is hardly an argument against this, for there are no means of knowing how all were killed, and Paul's Roman citizenship or distinction might have been the occasion of beheading in his case.

The popularity of the later date for Paul's death, 68 (67), is probably due in large measure to the fact that it is placed there by the Eusebian *Chronicle*. While that is so, the *real* testimony of the *Chronicle* is to the early date 64, for it assigns Paul's death (and Peter's) to the *outbreak* of the Neronian persecution, which was in fact in 64, although the *Chronicle* puts it in 68 (67). The association of the death with the beginning of the persecution is a much more trustworthy datum than the naming of a year which is unquestionably wrong for the outbreak of the persecution. This gives us quite certainly the year 64 for Paul's death.<sup>6</sup>

The choice of 68 (67) instead of 64 for Paul's death has been also to some extent due to the apologetic need for a few years after Paul's first Roman imprisonment, which in current chronological schemes ended in 63, for the journeys of Paul reflected in the pastoral epistles, and

<sup>6</sup> Harnack is of the opinion that the mistake in Eusebius at this point is due to his acceptance of the widespread early tradition that the twelve apostles remained in Jerusalem for twelve years after Jesus' death, *i. e.*, until 42 A. D., and that Peter then worked for twenty-five years in Rome, *i. e.*, until 67 or 68; and inasmuch as Eusebius understood that Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom at about the same time, Paul's death was assigned with Peter's to this late date.

for the genuineness of the epistles themselves. But even if the release from the first imprisonment was in 63, it would be the spring of that year (*cf.* Acts 28:11-16, 30), and more than a year of liberty would fall to Paul before the burning of Rome on July 19, 64; this period would be sufficient for the events and genuineness of the epistles to Timothy and Titus. Of course, if the scheme of earlier dates for the whole apostolic age were taken, it would leave from 58 to 64, six whole years, for these things. It would also be possible to assign to that long period the work of Peter at Rome for which Professor McGiffert argues so strongly; for that purpose Paul need not have been dead, but only permanently absent from the city, and that he seems to have been.

We have seen that there is much evidence to support the revived chronology, and that there are some gains in accepting it. But it is not at all clearly the correct chronology; the problem is one of great complexity, and the balance swings almost evenly between the two views. Perhaps for practical purposes it is better to continue for the present in our adherence to the current scheme of dates, with the hope that clearer light may later fall from some quarter upon the problem.